

Questions and Answers regarding H1N1 in BH-BL as of October 21, 2009

1. Do we have H1N1 in each building?

Yes, we have H1N1 in each building and expect to have flu for months according to projections from our County Health departments.

2. Whom are we consulting for guidance on H1N1?

Federal level –

- flu.gov website
- press conference by Secretary for Education & Secretary for Health

State level –

- State Health Department & State Education Department created a joint webinar on H1N1 attended by representatives from the district (administrators & nurses)
- calls to the Department of Health

Regional level –

- Superintendents meeting with Schenectady County Commissioner of Health (all 7 Schenectady County Superintendents attended)
- Calls to the Schenectady County Commissioner of Health – ongoing as needed
- Calls to the Saratoga County Director of Prevention – ongoing as needed
- Our BOCES Health & Safety consultant (Cynthia Holmes) is sharing information

Local level –

- Our nurses are sharing procedures, information and presenting information to County Health agencies
- District physician Dr. Sipperly has been consulted by our nurses and the superintendent
- Procedural strategies are being shared with other local school districts

3. Are we monitoring the local situation?

- Yes, we are monitoring data on a daily basis
 1. Student absences (Note: Additionally all the nurses personally called parents of students with significant medical issues, diabetes, neuro-muscular disorders, students on oxygen, etc., to let them know that we had H1N1 in the schools and what symptoms to watch for in their child.)
 2. Student incidence of flu-like symptoms (A checklist for parent call-ins regarding student symptoms is on each school homepage and answering machines)
 3. Staff absences
- We are also sharing information with county health organizations

4. Have we changed cleaning procedures?

Yes, we have asked our custodians to increase their cleaning routines whenever possible on hard surfaces. Each night custodians are disinfecting desks (Teachers: please leave your chairs on the floor to expedite this process), bathrooms, and locker rooms.

We are making extra efforts to keep soap and towel dispensers full. (Please let your custodian know if one is empty.) We have added additional dispensers throughout the district.

The CDC reminds us that the virus usually dies on environmental surfaces after 2-8 hours. The CDC also explains that detergents kill the virus (soap and water with a paper towel will kill the virus). Therefore we are reminding all staff not to bring cleaning supplies from home. Our Health and Safety Committee reminds

you that the district must have a record of disinfectant materials (HAZCOM requirement) to insure proper use and to respond to adverse reactions. Please take home any cleaning materials you may have brought to school in an effort to help.

Currently our custodial staff are going beyond the recommended cleaning routine suggested by our county health organization.

5. Where can staff members & parents get more information?

- Primary source – your personal doctor (who knows not only your history but your family’s history)
- Secondary sources –
 - building nurse
 - links on the BH-BL website to the CDC and other reliable information sources

6. What is happening with our absentee rate?

We are monitoring the trends, which are currently following the projections of the Schenectady County Health Commissioner. The spring performance of this flu was charted with growth spikes followed by gradual decline. In some cases a second wave of illness followed at a later period. Dr. David Pratt (Schenectady County Commissioner of Health) told us to expect 30-50% of the general population would experience H1N1.

We believe one of the reasons for the increased absenteeism we are currently seeing is that our parents are listening to our advice to keep students home at the first sign of illness. Many of these absences are turning out to be colds; many are cases of flu whether confirmed or not.

Currently our staff absenteeism has been consistently LOW, which fits the projections from our county health organization that the highest incidence of H1N1 will fall within the 2 to 24 year age range.

7. What factors are being considered in whether to close school or not?

The CDC has revised its perspective on school closing from last spring. Their recommendation places the decision at the local level. Our decision would be made in conjunction with County Health Commissioner and our school physician.

There are many factors that would be considered regarding a closing.

- One factor to consider would be the level of staff illness. Can we deliver education? We are tracking this information on a daily basis.
- Another factor to consider would be the student absenteeism trends in the area. Other districts have seen spikes of absenteeism followed by gradual declines, similar to what we experienced at the Middle School over the last week.
- Another factor is the projected length of the flu season in our area. With this flu, closing for a few days puts us back at the same place when we reopen.
- Another factor is the role of schools in assisting health authorities with dissemination of information and vaccinations as they become available.

These factors are constantly being evaluated.

8. Will BH-BL provide vaccinations for students?

We have agreed to work with our County Health Departments to be dispensation sites for H1N1 vaccinations for children. The counties are working out details and plan to communicate logistics in the next few weeks.